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Contestants for the 2025 Miss Three Oaks and River Valley pageant

Miss Three Oaks/River Valley pageant on tap for next weekend

The 2025 Miss Three Oaks/River Valley Pageant will be held at 3 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 11, at the River Valley High School Auditorium.

Miss contestants for this year's "Wrigley Field"-themed pageant are Mikayla Falzone, Lydia Habel and Ava-Marie Ledesma. The Teen contestants are Brianna Taylor and Peyton Swain. The Little Miss contestants are Teya Chase, Isabella Wisner and Nora Wisniewski. Little Mr. are Boden James, Remy Reyna Blake Monroe.

Tickets are $20. The high school auditorium is located at 15480 Three Oaks Road in Three Oaks. — STAFF REPORTS

PANCAKE BREAKFAST TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THE PLUNGE

The public is invited to have some pancakes, while supporting a great cause, at the Pancake Fundraiser for New Buffalo Township Fire and Berrien County Sheriff Office Polar Plunge Teams from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, Jan. 11, at the New Buffalo Township Public Safety Building.

Proceeds from this event will go to the NBT Fire and Berrien County Sheriff's office Polar Plunge teams, which benefits Special Olympics.

This year's Southwest Michigan Polar Plunge is scheduled to take place Saturday, Feb. 1, at Watermark Brewing at 5767 St. Joseph Avenue in Stevensville, with registration/check-in opening in the patio area of Watermark at 10 a.m. and plunging in the Plungester taking place at noon. The After Splash Bash in Watermark's Solarium takes place at 1:30 pm.

The New Buffalo Township Public Safety Building is located at 17425 Red Arrow Highway in New Buffalo. — STAFF REPORTS

CORRECTION

On the page 5 article, "Grand Beach Village Council talks village roads" in the Dec. 26 issue, it was incorrectly stated that Michelle Maroney, the newly hired deputy clerk for the Village of Grand Beach, was the only candidate for the position. It was stated by Harry Walder, president of the village council, that applicants were interviewed for deputy clerk, but Maroney had been the only one they found whom they could "recommend to the council." Clerk Kimberly Wolnik added that Maroney had been helping out a few days a week for two months in the office. The *New Buffalo Times* regrets this error.

The high-souled does not continue to experience the effects of distress on its reasoning. The reason why is because, as if living high up in the mountains, situation after situation, the soul looks "down" on the vicissitudes of the human condition. *— Dino N. Fatouros*

Local Government Meetings

New Buffalo Times

Democracy Requires Transparency

CITY OF NEW BUFFALO
VANCE PRINCE, MAYOR
CITY COUNCIL
MARK ROBERTSON, ROGER LIJEWSKI, KAREN GEAR, RICH KNOLL, VANCE PRICE
City Council meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 6:30PM
CITY OF NEW BUFFALO PLANNING COMMISSION MEETINGS
Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 5:30PM
NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP BOARD
HOWARD MALES, MICHELLE HEIT, MICHELLE HANNON, PATTY IAZZETTO, BARBARA ANDERSON
Board meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 4PM
NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 6:30PM
SHERIFF BERRIEN COUNTY
Sheriff, Chuck Heit
Undersheriff, Greg Sanders
NEW BUFFALO AREA RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY
Meets at 10AM on the 2nd Wednesday of every other month (odd) at New Buffalo Township Hall, 17425 Red Arrow Highway New Buffalo
NEW BUFFALO AREA SCHOOLS BOARD
LISA WERNER, JOHN HASKINS, DENISE CHURCHILL, JENNIFER SUMMERS, VANESSA THUN, STEPHEN DONNELLY, GREG VOSBERG
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP BOARD
DAVID BUNTE, PAULA DUDIAK, LIZ RETTIG, RICHARD SULLIVAN, ARTHUR ANDERSON
Chikaming Board meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30PM
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Meets on the 1st Wednesday of each month at 6:30PM
THREE OAKS
THREE OAKS TOWNSHIP BOARD
Meets on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7PM
VILLAGE OF THREE OAKS BOARD
Meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7PM
GRAND BEACH
Meets on the 3rd Wednesday at 5PM EST
KIMBERLY WOLNIK, CLERK-TREASURER
HARRY WALDER, JACK GRACE, ED SEBASTIAN, PETER DOERR, EDWARD BRANDES
MICHIANA
VILLAGE OF MICHIANA COUNCIL
Meets on the 2nd Friday of each month at 1PM

Outgoing veteran judge helps give oath to new judge

BY STAN MADDUX

The soon to be 22nd judge in the history of La Porte Circuit Court established in 1851 took the oath of office in a packed courtroom Friday, Dec. 27.

Julianne Havens was sworn in by outgoing La Porte Circuit Court Judge Tom Alevizos and former La Porte Superior Court 1 Judge Kathleen Lang.

Havens, who has spent much of her career as a La Porte County deputy prosecutor, thanked members of her family, along with some of her past and present colleagues in the legal profession, following the swearing in ceremony.

"I'm truly blessed to be here and humbled by everyone who is here," she said.

She also gave thanks to some of the attorneys she went up against in past criminal trials by forcing her to think of ways to overcome the challenges they posed in defense of their clients.

"Thank you for making me a better attorney," she said.

Havens was unopposed in the November general election after defeating her Republican opponents in the May primary.

Alevizos did not seek a fourth consecutive six year term.

He was a city councilman in Michigan City before serving three terms as a state representative from 1992 to 1998.

He was later a deputy prosecutor in La Porte County for several years before being elected to his first term as judge.

Alevizos, 63, cited his age and desire to spend more time with his three children, who are 14, 15 and 20, for deciding not to run again for reelection.

Alevizos said he did not want to risk being forced to step down midway through another term from an unexpected downturn in his health and having the state appoint his replacement.

"I wanted the people of La Porte County to decide who my successor was. I think it all worked out great. I'm very happy," he said.

Alevizos said among the highlights of his career was having a role in creating three different problem solving courts.

Two of those courts are designed to help people whose crimes stem from things like substance abuse and mental illness.

The other problem-solving court is aimed at reuniting families by the assistance provided to try and stop child abuse in the home.

Alevizos said one of the things he enjoyed most about the job was interacting with jurors and discovering how they learned to appreciate the criminal justice system from what they experienced in the courtroom.

As a judge, Alevizos said he wants to be remembered mostly as "fair and knowledgeable."

Atley Price, who has tried many criminal cases in his over 20 years as a deputy prosecutor in La Porte County, said that Alevizos was "very schooled" and "very knowledgeable" about the law.

Price said he was also was very compassionate toward victims.

He said Alevizos also had a heart for offenders whose first brush with the law stemmed from circumstances like substance abuse, family problems or financial hardship.

Unlike most judges, Price said Alevizos reached out as an advisor outside the courtroom for prosecutors he felt might not be taking the most effective approach in trying to prove a criminal case during a trial.

"It was almost like it was that lawyer in him. A lot of times, he was right," he said.

Alevizos came across as a common man in the way he acted and spoke many times inside and outside the courtroom.

He was personable and not short of a joke if he felt the situation was right to lighten the mood.

"He has a great sense of humor. He could laugh and he could laugh at himself," said attorney Dave Sirugo, who mostly went before the judge in defending suspected criminals.

There was no mistaking who was in charge, though, and respected for what seemed to be a photographic memory of the law.

Alevizos was also known for giving offenders a stern lecture or tongue lashing whenever he felt it was needed at sentencing, especially in the most extreme cases.

"He certainly left his footprint and will be long remembered," Price said.

Havens officially begins her duties Jan. 1.

The measure of a man is what he does with power.
— Plato

Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber awarded $60,000 from Corewell Health Foundation Southwest Michigan

The Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber has been awarded a total of $60,000 from the Corewell Health Foundation Southwest Michigan to support two of its 501(c)3 subsidiaries, the Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber Foundation and Discover Southwest Michigan.

The award will help strengthen the Chamber's overall efforts to foster economic growth, attract and retain talent and address critical community needs across Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties.

"On behalf of our board and our members, we are greatly appreciative of Corewell Health Foundation's generous investment in our mission," said Arthur Havlicek, president and CEO of the Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber. "This funding will enable us to deploy impactful programming across the community, with the goal of increasing prosperity and population throughout Southwest Michigan."

[Front row] Soroya Pierre-VanArtesen, president, Corewell Health Foundation Southwest Michigan and vice president, Philanthropy for Corewell Health Lakeland Hospitals; Olivia Starks, Starks Family Funeral Homes and incoming SMRC board chair; Arthur Havlicek, SMRC president and CEO; Christine Vanlandingham, Corewell Health South board chairman; Natalie Baggio, RN, president & COO Corewell Health South. [Back row] Molly McFadden, SMRC resource development manager; Leanne Brownfield, Sturgis Bank and SMRC Foundation Board of Directors; Jasmine Hansen, SMRC membership engagement manager; Ron Sorce, Four Winds Casino and SMRC Board of Directors; Dr. James Gendernalik, DO, Family Physicians of St. Joseph, P.C. and SMRC Board of Directors; Sarah Spoonholtz, SMRC director of membership and events.

The Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber Foundation was awarded $50,000 to support programming across the Chamber's four pillars of service: Leadership Development, Business Development, Community Development and Economic Development.

Discover Southwest Michigan, the Chamber's initiative aimed at increasing population growth by showcasing Southwest Michigan as an ideal place to live, work and raise a family, was awarded $10,000.

"Corewell Health is enthusiastic about backing the Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber Foundation's efforts to advance leadership, economic growth, business, and community progress," said Soroya Pierre-VanArtsen, president of the Corewell Health Foundation Southwest Michigan and vice president of philanthropy for Corewell Health Lakeland Hospitals. "We are equally eager to support the Chamber's Discover Southwest Michigan initiative. We firmly believe that Discover Southwest Michigan will be a groundbreaking initiative to draw in talent, thereby expanding our workforce and community. A vibrant community functions as a dynamic system in which individuals feel a sense of belonging and support, and where their needs are fulfilled."

The Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber is a non-profit business advocacy and collective-impact organization serving Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. Established in 1954, the Chamber works to strengthen regional assets, advocate for regional priorities and cultivate an economic ecosystem that prepares the region for future opportunities.

Discover Southwest Michigan is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated solely to business and talent attraction in Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. Its mission is to grow the region's population through regional marketing that positions the region as an ideal destination to live, work and raise a family and relocation services that engage external talent, convert them into long-term residents and help integrate them so that they may build fulfilling personal and professional lives within the community.

The Corewell Health Foundation Southwest Michigan works with individual donors, families, corporations and area foundations to generate resources through grants, charitable donations and bequests. These resources provide new equipment, expansion and renovation of hospital facilities, support for quality health care services and beyond. — STAFF REPORTS

HIKE PLANNED AT TOWER HILL CAMP

The trails of Tower Hill Camp and Retreat Center will be the site of a hike at 1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 11.

Those who desire a slightly longer hike can continue the walk to the Lake Michigan shore, for a total of about 2.5 miles.

Tower Hill is operated by the United Church of Christ and was a gift of the E.K. Warren estate in the early 20th century. It hosts retreats, family groups, children's programs and individual vacationers at its 60-acre-plus site in Sawyer.

The Jan. 11 hike will be led by Harbor Country Hikers President Pat Fisher, who will kick off the event with a brief talk about how animals survive the winter and prepare for spring. Those who attend are advised to dress in layers, wear sturdy shoes or boots, and bring plenty of water. This hike is rated moderately physically difficult.

Though membership is preferred, this event is free and open to all. For driving directions to Tower Hill and other details, visit www.harborcountryhikers.com or the group's Facebook page. — STAFF REPORTS

To Your Health

COLUMN BY KAREN EDWARDS ND

DETOX CLEANSE AND REBUILD YOUR BODY

Happy New Year 2025! As usual, most of us make some kind of resolution of what we are going to do better this year. The number one New Year Resolution though, is weight loss. Weight loss is a side effect of better health. I can help you, but… YOU have to be willing and do the work.

Don't read any further if you are not willing to go through some withdrawals and changes. If you want better health, weight loss, more energy and a clearer mind, body and spirit, then keep reading.

We were given instructions to good health in the beginning of time. Our body is our Temple. (Our house)We live in an environment of polluted air, water and soil. We eat nonfoods that are full of chemicals, preservatives, pesticides, additives. Dyes, GMO's, bio engineered foods and other potential toxins.

Colon cleansing is an essential health regimen and a ritual for many cultures. It is what I call "nutritional insurance." I believe colon cleansing will help transition you and offer you a new life – by cleaning out the old waste and preparing for the new nutrients and denserwinter foods.

WE ARE ONLY AS HEALTHY AS OUR COLON

Poor eating habits of sugars, white flour and chemicals, dairy, low-fiber diets, stress, low exercise and other poor lifestyle choices can slow and block the digestive processes. If waste sits in the colon, toxins build up there and are eventually absorbed back into the body. The body becomes poisoned from its own metabolic waste. Leaky gut, bloating and inflammation begins, other aches and pains from high acid in the body are now present. Skin issues and hair loss also becomes a big problem. DIS-ease sets in.

My first suggestion when bringing someone back into health balance – is to clean up the digestion. Start with drinking a lot of water daily and dry skin brushing (Watch a youtube video on this.) Here is the easiest and best way that I will give you.

Eat Clean. Eliminate processed, denatured junk foods and give your body living foods. Fruit, vegetables, beans, legumes raw nuts and seeds and microgreens These are foods that our bodies were meant to survive and thrive on. This sounds too easy, but eliminating processed chemically laden foods is not always easy because we are addicted to them. They release temporary "feel good" hormones, the same as heroin and cocaine.

The big key. Drink Hyper nourishing green smoothies every morning. A green smoothie a day keeps inflammation away. Add all to blender. 2 handfuls leafy greens ¼ cup chia seeds and or flax seeds 2 frozen bananas, 1 cup frozen fruit of choice, 1 tsp. blackstrap molasses. Fill with water or nondairy milk above greens.

Do this daily for the hyper nourishment that your body craves and will quickly utilize. Filling every cell with nutrients it probably has not had. Cleanse, detox and Rebuild is the answer to better health. This Green Smoothie daily is life changing.

These articles are for educational purposes. Do not go off any of your medications without talking with your Healthcare Practitioner.

Karen Edwards is a board-Certified Dr. of Naturopathy, Master Herbalist, Vegan and Raw food Chef. She is owner of Holistic Alternatives in New Buffalo and La Porte for over 25 years.

Son of state lawmaker gets nod for county council seat

BY STAN MADDUX

The son of a local Indiana state lawmaker will serve the two years remaining on an open seat on the La Porte County Council in what could represent a shift in power within the La Porte County Republican Party.

Jim Pressel, III, of Rolling Prairie defeated outgoing La Porte County Auditor Tim Stabosz by two votes Saturday, Dec. 28, in a Republican Party Caucus held to fill the seat of Mike Rosenbaum.

He is the son of Jim Pressel, Jr., who has been the District 20 state representative since 2016.

There were 24 precinct committee persons voting for the District 4 seat.

Pressel, 38, said his top priorities include helping to get local government working together again, eliminating deficit spending and restoring the county's A+ credit rating.

"Above all, I believe we need to learn how to find common ground, set aside our differences and put our community first," he said.

Several years ago, he succeeded his father as head of Pressel Enterprises, a housing construction and remodeling firm.

Rosenbaum, who was on the council for six years, is vacating the seat to become the next La Porte County auditor following his victory in the Nov. 8 general election.

Stabosz, who lost in the May primary for a seat on the three-member Board of La Porte County Commissioners, was a central figure in the extreme political fighting over the past four years.

Before the voting, each of the six candidates gave a speech after being introduced by their supporters.

In his introduction of Stabosz, La Porte County Councilman Justin Kiel described him as sometimes "brash" and "stubborn," but also unwavering from his "principles and his dedication to doing what he believes is right for this county."

Stabosz firmly told the audience he doesn't regret shining the public spotlight light over the past four years on "wasteful spending" and what he alleges are political figures lining their pockets at the public trough.

"I don't apologize for calling out self-dealing or pay to play which, unfortunately, have been the order of the day in La Porte County government," he said.

From the beginning, his Republican and Democrat opponents have strongly disputed what they have repeatedly described as unproven claims.

They also labeled him as unstable and called him out publicly for mistakes in the auditor's office, including one that nearly cost taxpayers $2.5 million in a scam.

In asking for support, Stabosz also told the audience he will never do what some local Republicans have done, including working secretly with Democrats, to "undermine our unity" within the party.

La Porte County Commission President Connie Gramarossa, who frequently clashed with Stabosz during public meetings, said she felt the outcome of the caucus was a reflection of the desire to move forward in a more peaceful manner.

"Yes. Absolutely," she said.

Stabosz also lost in the May primary in Republican races for precinct committeeman and state delegate.

La Porte County Republican Party Chairman Allen Stevens believes Stabosz still has a future role to play in the party.

He said Stabosz was a factor in La Porte County going from slightly Democratic to strongly Republican over the past several years from his ability to recruit candidates and help finance their campaigns.

"He's been a good partner. That's been a big part of our success countywide, his recruiting candidates. You can't win if you don't run somebody and you can't run somebody if you're not recruiting," he said.

SPORTS

From the Bleachers

COLUMN BY KURT MARGGRAF IN CHICAGO

As 2024 draws to a close, I suppose we should look back on the year in Chicago sports.

I'm really not sure I want to do this because I try to look at the bright side, and truthfully, there weren't that many happenings in my sports world that were positive. Let's begin with the White Sox.

They lost more games than any other team in the recorded history of Major League Baseball. It's difficult to imagine that they won't be better next year, but they did trade away Garrett Crochet who was unquestionably their best player last year and they have a curmudgeon for an owner. Let's hope they can win at least 42 games in 2025.

On the other side of town, the Cubs won twice as many games as the Sox but were almost as disappointing. The year started out with the hiring of Craig Counsell and the resigning of Cody Bellinger.

They took Counsell, an extremely successful manager, away from their biggest competitor, and they gave Bellinger a Kings ransom to return to the Cubbies. Bellinger had a decent season, but the contract he signed showed that the Cubs thought he would have a MVP type of season. So the year ended with Bellinger being shipped off to the Yankees for a bag of donuts and Counsell seemingly having a little more say in the makeup of the team. There is hope that the Cubs can be at least a playoff team next year.

The Blackhawks remain a young team hoping that they can mature quickly and Connor Bedard reaches super stardom rapidly. They need a stud goalie and a good new coach if they hope to make the playoffs next year.

The Bulls remain mired in mediocrity. They seem to be trying to trade a few of their best players but are unable to because of their contracts. They really need to start over and construct their roster more logically. Billy Cunningham remains their coach and that is significant because all the other teams in Chicago fired theirs in the last twelve months.

Finally, that brings us to the Bears.

Their season has been a disaster, undoubtedly the worst of all the Chicago teams. It started out so promising with free agent signings. D'Andre Swift was signed to be the teams running back. The draft netted Caleb Williams and Rome Odunze. They traded for Keenan Allen. The defense was solid from the year before and expectations were high.

Apparently, the general manager, and the fans, forgot that in order to be successful, the offense needed a line to block for these excellent skilled position players, and even more importantly, good coaches were necessary.

I've never witnessed a team fall apart like the Bears did this year. The good news is, 2025 brings new hope. Maybe all our teams will find magic next year.

Bob Dylan sang, "The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind, the answer is blowin' in the wind."

Be kind. Talk to you next week. Peace, love, and happiness.

Bison back on the winning track

BY STAN MADDUX

The New Buffalo High School boys' basketball team snapped a two-game losing streak by soundly defeating Battle Creek Calhoun Christian at home Friday, Dec. 27.

The Bison (6-2) led by just two points after the first quarter but went on to a 66-40 victory.

New Buffalo went into halftime with an eight-point lead but dominated the rest of the way especially in the fourth quarter, when the Bison outscored their opponents by 12 points.

Center Lucas Forker led the Bison with 20 points and 11 rebounds, while Trevor James put up 15 points.

Sam Tripp added 14 points to go with seven assists and also grabbed eight rebounds.

The Bison also shined on defense, with 15 steals and 7 blocked shots.

With a solid core of mostly juniors, New Buffalo began the season with four consecutive victories before losing on the road to much stronger teams from Berrien Springs 65-27 and Buchanan 61-46.

The Bison are not scheduled to play again until after Christmas break, when they take on Covert at home Jan. 6.

The next games on the schedule are at Brandywine Jan. 9 and at home against River Valley Jan. 10.

I have a very unique game that most people don't have, most people don't ever see. — *Dylan Harper*

New Buffalo American Legion throws 'Pennies for Patients' fundraiser

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Seeing as how her father surprised Charlynn McCullough with a 16th birthday party, complete with a live band, at the Three Oaks American Legion Post 204 in 1964, it would make sense that her memory would live on through a live music event at the New Buffalo American Legion Post 169.

The Pennies for Patients fundraiser, which was held Saturday, Dec. 28, was supporting Berrien County Cancer Service, Inc., with all money from the event going toward the organization.

Chuck Covert, Jr., the younger brother of McCullough, said she had non-Hodgkin's lymphoma before developing another type of cancer. She passed away in 2022.

Berrien County Cancer Service was with McCullough for 15 years of her cancer journey.

"Today we're paying it forward to help people in 2025," Covert said.

Money was raised through a taco dinner, donations and a silent auction. There were also Christmas boxes, with guests buying a ticket for a dollar and putting it in a box for the gift they want.

The Michigan City-based Classic Moments was also playing, with a special appearance by Bob Bowen, who's a New Buffalo graduate.

A graduate of New Buffalo High School, McCullough went to Twin Cities Beauty College, which was in Benton Harbor at the time. Afterward, she became a beautician in New Buffalo.

Covert said their father, Charles Covert, Sr., had a barber shop in Three Oaks and had appointments at the house. All five of his father's sisters were beauticians.

McCullough raised three daughters, all of whom graduated from New Buffalo.

For her 75th birthday, McCullough told Covert that she wanted a party at the legion.

While she passed away just short of turning 75, the legion still celebrated by throwing a "Char's Last Dance" fundraiser, which also raised money for Berrien County Cancer Service.

Covert said that the older brother of the band leader of Classic Moments, Garry England, was in a band that played at McCullough's 16th birthday. The band, which was popular throughout Three Oaks, played during all the school dances.

Being two years younger, Covert often tagged along with McCullough to dances, as his parents believed in "safety in numbers."

"She loved to dance, and she wanted to dance to every song," Covert said.

Having been around since 1948, Tyanna Essig, director of development for Berrien County Cancer Service, said that the St. Joseph, Michigan-based organization serves all the residents of Berrien County.

"We do in home skilled nursing, so it's nursing, port flushes, blood draws - different things all during a person's cancer journey, so even if they're done with treatment, we still help them," she said.

Essig added that a nurse visited McCullough every week and "just made sure she was doing okay."

Berrien County Cancer Service serves about 520 patients a year. It has a resource locker, where they give walkers, wheelchairs, incontinence items and nutritional supplements.

The organization is in the Marie Yeager Cancer Center in St. Joseph; however, the nurses travel to residents' homes throughout the county.

The nurses, who are RNs, have been trained in oncology.

Due to fundraisers like the one being held at the New Buffalo American Legion, everything that Berrien County Cancer Service provides to residents is free.

Essig said that Pennies for Patients began in 1990.

She added that they're looking to possibly do another "Pennies for Patients" in New Buffalo this summer.

Since his birthday was Jan. 1, Covert said that he viewed the event as being his own celebration.

"This is what I wanted to do for my 75th birthday – this is my present," he said.

Brenda Thompson and Joni Dyniewski, who Covert said were the first volunteers to "step up" for that day's fundraiser, were responsible for the Christmas in July fundraiser the legion held last summer. Money from that event went toward the purchase of slippers, toothpaste and other necessities for the Veterans Hospital in Battle Creek this past Christmas.

Covert said that the New Buffalo American Legion has recently seen an uptick in new members. Legion members include veterans; the Ladies Auxiliary, who have family members who were in the service and the Sons of the American Legion, who also have family members who served.

Covert said he's part of the Sons of the American Legion, as his father was in the service.

"You can join if it's a grandparent or parent... We support the veterans and that's what it's all about," Covert said.

Chuck Covert, along with members of the Covert family and Tyanna Essig hold the over $1,000 check to Berrien County Cancer Service

The crowd gathers at the legion

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Chuck Covert thanks the audience for their support

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Allegations reveal school bus driver impaired by heroin

BY STAN MADDUX

Heroin is what a La Porte school bus driver was impaired by while recklessly transporting dozens of students in the fall.

Those among the allegations contained in the probable cause information charging Kayla Pier with operating while intoxicated and neglect of a dependent, both Level 6 felonies.

Pier, 38, of Michigan City is scheduled to make her initial appearance on the allegations Friday in La Porte Circuit Court.

According to court documents, Pier during the afternoon on September 20 was transporting 32 students from La Porte Middle School to Riley Elementary School.

Court documents also revealed three of the students reported the driver was acting oddly, appeared to be falling asleep and was mumbling, slurring her words, operating the bus erratically and even ran a stop sign.

In response, Cary Brinkman, Director of Transportation for the La Porte Community School Corporation, went to Riley Elementary School where the bus sat empty after unloading the students.

Brinkman, a retired police officer, made contact with Pier.

He found her behavior to be similar to what the students described and noticed other potential signs of impairment like bloodshot/glassy eyes and the pupils of her eyes being dilated, according to court documents.

Initially, authorities said Pier denied using any type of alcohol or drugs.

Eventually, she consented to a drug test which revealed the presence of 6-Acetylmorphine, a metabolite produced by the body within 24 hours of using heroin, court records showed.

Police said Pier resigned from her positon later that day.

During her initial interview with police in mid-December, Pier continued to deny using any illegal drugs, according to court documents,

Five days later, though, she called police and stated "she had taken something" but didn't know what it was until informed about the results of the toxicology test.

Pier then expressed a need for "help," court documents revealed.

On December 27, Pier turned herself in on a warrant issued for her arrest the previous week and was later released on bond.

Pier could face anywhere from six to 30 months on each count.

Erin Meyer, Director of Communications for the La Porte Community School Corporation, said the students reporting their concerns about the driver exemplified the "see something, say something" principles taught in the schools.

Meyer also said the school corporation maintains rigorous standards for all transportation employees, including mandatory random drug and alcohol testing, regular credential verification and ongoing safety training.

"All drivers must hold a Commercial Driver's License with proper endorsements and undergo regular medical examinations as state and federal regulations require," she said.

A Writer's Life...

DURING THE GOLDEN AGE OF TELEVISION ANIMATION

BY JACK OLESKER

Getting my bearings...

1984 is a good year for this writer who is enjoying A Writer's Life...During The Golden Age of Television Animation. My first television episode -- "The Forest Littles", Episode 3 of Season 2 of The Littles -- has aired. It's definitely cool to see my name right under the episode's title on the TV screen.

Jean still maintains his professorial aura when talking with me about writing for television. It is increasingly apparent to me that he knows his stuff.

I must be doing something right because the studio assigns me two more scripts for The Littles. I am being paid $1,500 for a half-hour script. That may not sound like a lot, but adjusted for inflation it would come out to about$4,500 in present-day dollars; not enough for me to retire to the South of France, but not long ago I was earning just $350 a week as an associate editor at Entrepreneur Magazine. So it's a nice paycheck for a week's work. Still, I know that to live off my writing I'll have to write a lot more than two or three episodes of The Littles each season.

Jean is teaching me more and more. He reminds, "You can't use TILT DOWN AERIAL SHOTS in animation because you'd have to animate every creature on the ground." He warns, "Don't ever have a tiger in a script again. You can't animate the stripes!" (And back then you couldn't.) I am learning. But while everything seems to go fast in the beginning, now it feels like I'm slogging through mud. I want it to go faster.

Then two things happen that change everything.

I'm getting known at DIC Entertainment as a writer who can write fast and can consistently deliver quality scripts. I've begun what will be a decades-long business relationship that will grow into a wonderful lifelong friendship with Lori Crawford, DIC's Director of Creative Affairs. We hit it off from the start because we have similar personalities, the same relentless work ethic and the same sense of humor – scathing and able to both dish it out and take it in.

Jean is my mentor, but Lori is my Insider. She shows me the ropes, explains who's who, what's what and gives me the lay of the land. Naturally, Lori knows Jeffrey Scott well. After all, Jeffrey wrote an entire season of episodes for The Littles. She gushes as she tells me Jeffrey is Jean's go-to writer...and Lori doesn't ordinarily gush.

Because of his huge output, there's a rumor Jeffrey has a cadre of writers who knock out scripts that he puts his name on. Because I, too, write at a furious pace, I realize the rumor is absurd, likely fueled by jealousy.

Over time I figure out Andy Heyward, President and CEO of DIC, runs the business end of the studio, Jean preferring to concentrate on creative matters. Andy definitely has a presence. Stylish, always attired in expensive business suits and signature horn-rimmed eyeglasses with vibrantly colored frames that match his vibrantly colored thin leather ties, Andy is engaging, cordial and closely related to Great White sharks. (That's a compliment.) He was – and still is -- one of the sharpest businessmen I'd ever met.

So when Lori phoned one day to say Andy Heyward wanted to see me, I knew things were picking up.

Jack Olesker's career in the entertainment industry spans over four decades. He has served as a story editor in L.A. as well as president of a motion picture and television company in Chennai, India. His writing ranges from Mighty Morphin Power Rangers, Care Bears and Hello Kitty's Furry Tale Theater to documentaries and horror novels and murder mysteries for adults.

HOROSCOPE

JANUARY 2-8, 2025

AS INTERPRETED BY SANDY "STAR" BENDT

ARIES MARCH 21—APRIL 19

Creative differences may cause a rift in the team and opening the floor to communicate differences may cause more problems. This is the time to deal with people privately and in ways that don't undermine the confidence of individuals or put a strain on the existing power dimensions of the group.

TAURUS APRIL 20—MAY 20

This week you would prefer to keep things private and not deal with public commentary. The problem is more with you wanting to protect your image, than dealing with people's hurt feelings. A little self-reflection will go a long way now. It's a lesson in the value of friendship.

GEMINI MAY 21—JUNE 21

There is some apprehension in following through with deals and agreements. Conflicts will arise between what has been said and what has been done. Things may not add up or be completed as stated. Don't despair. This is giving you an opportunity to review contracts and costs.

CANCER JUNE 22—JULY 22

Embrace the idea of spending your time, energy and income with things that are useful and have a direct purpose. Avoid things that do not lineup with your inner compass. It will be easy to get caught up in trends and sidetracked by social media. Be sure to take a break from online content.

LEO JULY 23—AUGUST 22

Differences with partners or business collaborators could get tense this week. It is important to go after opportunities when you are both in agreement. There could be some things hidden ties or behind the scenes communications that will be the game changer in what you decide to pursue.

VIRGO AUGUST 23—SEPTEMBER 22

Timing will be very important this week. If something doesn't feel right, leave it alone. Honoring apprehension opens the space for anything that is hidden or unknown to surface. Be ready for that this week. Don't force solutions or power through. Relax and let the cream rise to the top.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23—OCTOBER 22

Your feelings and creative ideas may clash with the larger audience. It's time to make adjustments and realign concepts to a more socially inclusive concept. Perhaps, you are dealing with your own social wounds and this is your opportunity to get confirmation that you are not alone.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23—NOVEMBER 21

There is an inner battle between the push to get chores and business projects completed and the need for rest and recouperation. As much as you have the ability to push through, are you turning out quality work or just meeting deadlines? Sleep and eat first, then get the job done.

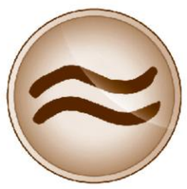
SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22—DECEMBER 21

Be sure you are using your skills and applying your knowledge to the betterment of a situation. It will be easy to get caught up in the monetary value of situations and overlook the emotional cost of getting involved. Situations will get very stressful if you don't prepare emotionally too.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22—JANUARY 19

Reciprocity and balance in relationships are issues that will be coming back, as if to haunt you, this week. Issues that you may have thought were settled in the past, may not be settling so nicely. There is an element of imbalance that has not come to light, until now.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20—FEBRUARY 18



Arguing and battling things out are not your style but you will stand your ground while compromising. Be ready for that this week. Things could become tense but you will succeed by letting the little things go. But when it comes to peace of mind, that's where you won't budge.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19—MARCH 20

Like hey diddle diddle, not all things have a dark meaning so, stop looking for the worst to happen. It's time to enjoy things and take it light. Yes, you may have a lot on your plate but it doesn't reflect something sinister. Perhaps, it means people like your work and value your opinions.

In the short run, the market is a voting machine but in the long run, it is a weighing machine. — *Benjamin Graham*

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						7	4	8
7		4						5
	1	8	4	6				
	6		7					9
		5	2		9			
								7
			9		8	5	2	
	2					8	1	

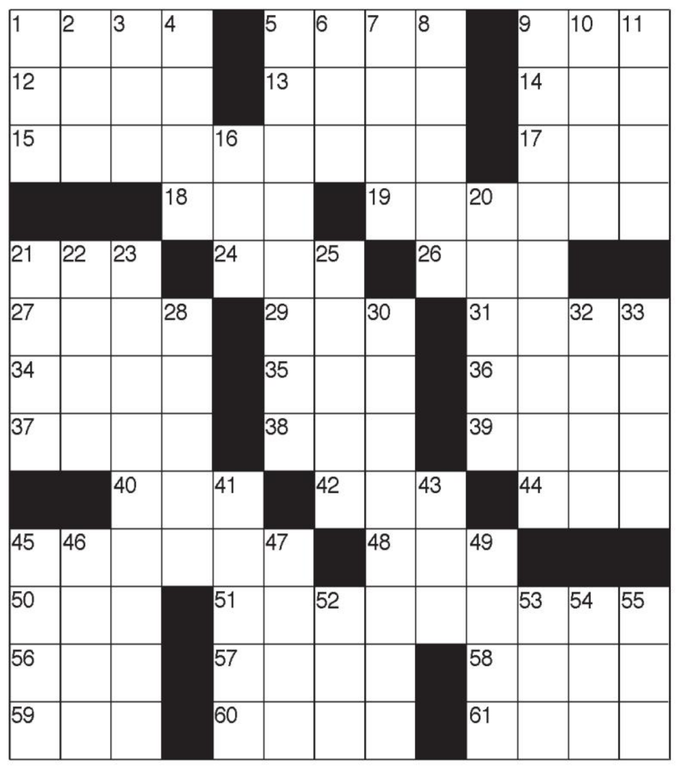
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

1 Ancient race of Japan
5 Ship's wheel
9 Socialist Labor Party (abbr.)
12 Ancient Gr. city
13 Large lake
14 Hawaiian assembly
15 Pirate (2 words)
17 Experimental (abbr.)
18 Corinthians (abbr.)
19 Barons
21 Here lies buried (abbr.)
24 Jap. fish
26 Border for a picture
27 Talk stupidly
29 Promise to pay
31 Dog salmon
34 Roman number II02
35 Celestial body
36 Scandinavian navigator
37 National (abbr.)
38 Multilateral Nuclear Force (abbr.)
39 Dried up
40 Commodore (abbr.)
42 Orbiting Astronomical Observatory (abbr.)
44 Doctor of Library Sciences (abbr.)
45 Battered
48 African native
50 Blockhead
51 Weapon
56 Imitator
57 P.I. dyewood tree
58 Mineral deposit
59 System (abbr.)
60 Red dye root
61 Boat

DOWN

1 Bronze money
2 Capable of (suf.)
3 Nat'l Intelligence Authority (abbr.)
4 United States Reserve Corps (abbr.)
5 Judaism
6 Tarzan creator's initials
7 Claim
8 Lake near Sea of Galilee
9 Protected
10 Extravagant
11 Playing card spots
16 Out (Scot.)
20 Roasts
21 Ode
22 Jackfruit
23 Gear
25 Demeter's other name
28 Aviator
30 Unjustly
32 Twirl (Scot.)
33 Expert pilots
41 Doctor
43 African sorcery (abbr.)
45 Sheep's cries
46 Descry
47 Cloud (pref.)
49 Mere
52 Narrow inlet of a river
53 Portuguese territory in India
54 Man's name: abbr.
55 Relative (abbr.)



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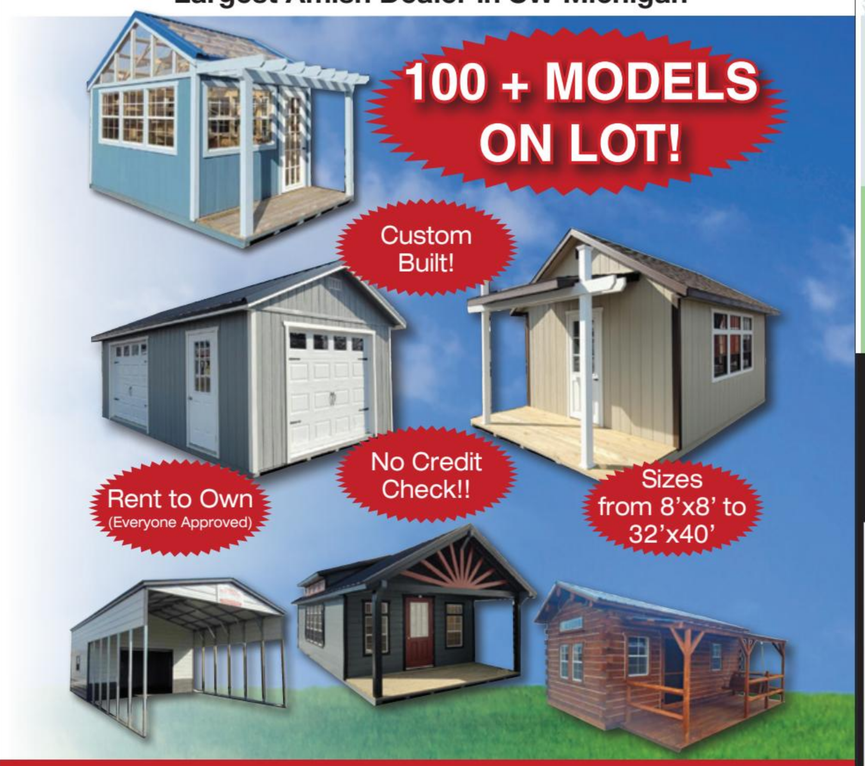

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OBITUARIES

Russ C. Kucera

1961-2024

Russ C. Kucera, of Michigan City, IN, formerly of Union Pier, MI, passed away peacefully on Monday – December 23, 2024, at his home. Arrangements have been entrusted to Sommerfeld Chapel – 15 N. Barton St., New Buffalo, MI. A Mass of Christian Burial will be held in Illinois. His final resting place will be in Forest Park, IL at the Woodlawn Cemetery, beside his parents.

Russ was born on May 11, 1961, in the Czech Republic, son of Marie/Cahel/Kucera and Josef Kucera. He graduated Riverside Brookfield High School, Illinois. He was a local entrepreneur along with his brothers for over 35 years in the New Buffalo area. Russ loved to ride his motorcycles, and enjoyed the outdoors. He was always kind and generous to his family and friends. He will be greatly missed.

Russ is survived by his two brothers – Joseph/Rita/Kucera of Illinois and James/Paula/Kucera of Union Pier, MI; his nieces and nephews – Marie, Benjamin, Kristine and Thomas; extended family in the Czech Republic; and many friends. He was preceded in death by his parents – Josef and Marie Kucera.

Russ brought joy to all who knew him and will be greatly missed.

Those wishing to sign Russ's memory book may do so at www.sommerfeldchapel.com

Genevieve Madeleine Scameheorn

1942-2024

Genevieve Madeleine Scameheorn, 82, of Three Oaks, passed suddenly, Sunday, December 22, 2024, in the presence of her family.

Her life began October 7, 1942, in Windsor, Canada, the youngest of 10 children born to George and Marguerite Pare'. She married John Scameheorn September 21, 1963 in Windsor, Canada.

Gen loved spending time with her family. She enjoyed reading and music. Gen and John travelled all over Michigan, they spent time in Alaska, Florida, and covered the eastern states of America.

Gen will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by her beloved husband of sixty-one years, John Scameheorn of Three Oaks; one daughter, Becky (Jarrod) Morris of Mobile, Alabama; one son, Chris (Jamie) Scameheorn of Stevensville; one granddaughter, Hannah Scameheorn of Stevensville; one sister, Bernadette Emery of Amestburg, Canada; and a host of nieces, nephews, and cousins.

She was preceded in death by her parents; five sisters; and three brothers.

Family and friends will gather at a later date and time to be announced.

Gen will be laid to rest in Forest Lawn Cemetery.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Genevieve be made to Corewell Hospice and Palliative Care, 4025 Health Parke Lane, St. Joseph, Michigan 49085.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Pobocik Chapel, Three Oaks. Please share a memory or a message online at www. wagnercares.com.

PET OF THE WEEK

OATMEAL

Oatmeal is about a two-and-a-half-year old male Guinea Pig, and is wanting to start off 2025 in the best way possible, with finding his new family. He loves treats, and when handed to him, he will chomp them and scurry away to enjoy them in peace. Then, while Oatmeal is snacking, he hopes that you are going to offer him another treat. He is a curious pig that likes to explore, and could do well in a home with children.

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8	5	1	6	4	7	2	9	3
6	9	2	1	5	3	7	4	8
7	3	4	8	9	2	1	6	5
9	1	8	4	6	5	3	7	2
2	6	3	7	8	1	4	5	9
4	7	5	2	3	9	6	8	1
1	8	6	5	2	4	9	3	7
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A	I	N	U	■	H	E	L	M	■	S	L	P
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■	■	■	C	O	R	■	N	O	B	L	E	S
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Y	A	U	P	■	I	O	U	■	K	E	T	A
M	C	I	I	■	S	U	N	■	E	R	I	C
N	A	T	L	■	M	L	F	■	S	E	R	E
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B	E	A	T	E	N	■	I	B	O	■	■	■
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DEATH NOTICES

THREE OAKS – Albert Lee Brayboy, 93, of Three Oaks, Michigan, passed away on Thursday, December 26, 2024. Arrangements are pending at Wagner Family Funerals Pobocik Chapel, Three Oaks.

THREE OAKS – Kirk Lewis Swenk, 68, of Three Oaks, Michigan, passed away on Wednesday, December 25, 2024. Arrangements are pending at Wagner Family Funerals Pobocik Chapel, Three Oaks.

LOCAL INTELLIGENCE
New Buffalo Times
— SINCE 1942 —

Doubt stirring over start of solar farm construction

BY STAN MADDUX

Plans to begin constructing a solar energy production facility on more than 3,000 acres of farm land in La Porte County early in 2025 might be in jeopardy.

La Porte County Building Commissioner Mike Polan said farmers who would lease their ground for energy to be produced from the sun have informed his office they've been told by the developers to plan on raising crops on their land again next year.

Steve Holifield, a Mill Creek farmer who will take a seat on the Board of La Porte County Commissioners Jan. 1, said he also heard from various sources that ground breaking has been pushed back indefinitely.

"Farmers have been told to go ahead and plan on farming that ground in 2025," he said.

Holifield, who's also a member of the Lincoln Township Advisory Board, lives a few miles from the solar farm site.

In June, RWE Clean Energy, LLC, was given a special exception to the current agricultural zoning to build a $500 million industrial solar farm that would produce enough electricity to power 68,000 homes.

The special exception was granted in a 3-2 vote by the La Porte County Board of Zoning Appeals.

Attempts to reach the Chicago-based firm with 130 solar projects operating in the U.S. were unsuccessful.

Polan said he also has not been contacted by the company on whether construction has been pushed back.

"All I can confirm is that I heard the rumor from residents," he said.

After approval was granted to build the solar farm, the La Porte County Commissioners approved the tightening of restrictions in an existing ordinance governing such operations in response to complaints.

The complaints included further loss of productive farm land to development and thousands of solar panels changing the existing landscape into an eyesore.

Holifield said one of his priorities after taking office will be to push for a further tightening of the restrictions.

Among the recent changes in the solar farm ordinance was a 250 foot setback from an existing property line.

Previously, the setback was 250 feet from a residence.

Holifield said he's open to the possibility of supporting an increase in the property line setback to 1,000 feet or more as other counties in Indiana have done in response to growing interest from the private sector in solar farm development.

Holifield said he also wants to examine the potential for a two-mile setback from any private wells.

"I would like to see a much tougher ordinance put in place. We'll see what happens," he said.

In recent months, Polan said other companies interested in building solar farms have requested copies from his office of the updated restrictions.

So far, Polan said no other company has submitted an application for a special exception to the zoning requirements.

"We don't have any active petitions that have been filed," he said.

Polan speculated RWE Clean Energy and other solar companies might be in a holding pattern until they can gauge what impact changes in the political landscape at the local, state and federal levels might have on them moving forward.

Holifield, for example, said President-elect Donald Trump's position against relying too much on green energy, for example, could reduce the amount of federal dollars on the table to help fund such privately developed operations.

"These projects are not profitable, not feasible without those federal tax credits and subsidies," he said.

SCHOOL OF AMERICAN MUSIC TO PRESENT 'RHYTHMS OF AMERICA: FROM JAZZ TO CLASSICAL,' WINTER SHOWCASE AT THE ACORN

The Acorn Center for the Performing Arts will be hosting two School of American Music events next weekend.

"Rhythms of America: From Jazz to Classical," which will feature Aglaja Petrova on piano and Charlie Mueller on cello, will take place at 4 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 11. The concert will feature solo piano, solo cello and duets by American composers (Scott Joplin, George Gershwin, Florence Price, Amy Beach) as well as a Bach cello suite. During the performance Petrova will speak about each piece to form a deeper connection between the audience, the performers and the music.

The concert is free thanks to the generous sponsorship of Margie and Bob Fisher, but tickets are required. Please obtain your free tickets at www.acornlive.org.

Aglaja Petrova is an exceptional pianist. She graduated from the highly prestigious Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University in 2023 with a piano performance major. She is currently in her second year of a master's program in Arts Administration at Indiana University. Petrova is from New Buffalo and Michigan City. She was a piano instructor for the School of American Music before she went away to college. She has performed at many School of American Music house concerts.

A very talented musician from Chicago, cellist Charlie Mueller is a senior in the cello performance program at Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University.

The School of American Music Winter Showcase, which will feature performances of intermediate and advanced students from the studios of instructors Matthew Daniel, Tom Fischer, Donna M. Mitchell, Tom Parisi, Garth Taylor, and Denise Vanden Bussche, will take place at 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 12.

The students will perform vocal and instrumental favorites from Romberg, Pietro Von, Brahms, Hans Zimmer, Bach, John Williams, Chicago Blues and many more. The showcase is free admission.

The School of American Music Winter Recital, which will feature students not in the Winter Showcase, will be at 2 and 4 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 26, at the Episcopal Church of the Mediator, located at 14280 Red Arrow Highway in Harbert. The recital will be free and open to the public.

The nonprofit School of American Music (SAM) provides education, performance, and audience opportunities in music in the Southwest Michigan area. For more information, contact SAM at 269-409-1191 or schoolofamericanmusic@gmail.com or visit School of American Music on Facebook or the website https://www.schoolofamericanmusic.com.

The Acorn Center for the Performing Arts is located at 107 Generations Drive in Three Oaks. — STAFF REPORTS

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